

REMARKS

Claims 1 - 11 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 12 - 20 are added as new claims. Accordingly, claims 1 - 20 are currently pending.

Turning now to the substance of the instant Office Action, the Examiner has objected to the disclosure for informalities. Namely, on page 14, “lowered” in line 2 and in line 6 should be --raised-- (as illustrated in Fig. 1, when the support table 14 is raised, stimuable phosphor sheet S is moved closer to the light collecting device 16.) This amendment to the specification, in addition to further amendments to the specification, are shown in the section “Amendment to the Specification.”

Claims 1 - 4 and 7 - 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S.P. No. 6,365,909 (“Hayakawa”) in view of U.S.P. No. 4,810,874 (“Torii”). Additionally, claims 5 and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hayakawa in view of Torii, and further in view of U.S.P. No. 4,965,455 (“Schneider”).

Rejection of Claims 1 - 4 and 7 - 11 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1 - 4 and 7 - 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S.P. No. 6,365,909 (“Hayakawa”) in view of U.S.P. No. 4,810,874 (“Torii”).

Succinctly, a *prima facie* case of obviousness requires that all of the claim limitations be taught or suggested. *See* M.P.E.P. § 2143.03. Because Hayakawa and Torii are both deficient for failing to teach or suggest a support table for placing thereon a container which houses a

stimulable phosphor sheet as recited by independent claim 1, the instant rejection is thus improper.

Hayakawa relates to a radiographic image reading apparatus wherein storage phosphor plates 12 are taken out from one of a plurality of cassettes 9, hung vertically on a plate holding section 4, and then scanned and read by an image reading section 5 (*see* Figs. 1 and 20; and Col. 15, line 12 to Col. 17, line 67). The image reading section 5 is capable of displacement for scanning and reading in at least one axial direction (*see* Col. 21, lines 54 - 61; and Fig. 13, elements 501 and 502). In comparison to independent claim 1 of the instant invention, however, Hayakawa fails to teach or suggest: (1) a support table for placing thereon a container which houses a stimulable phosphor sheet, (2) wherein the container includes a lid, as well as (3) the phosphor sheet being housed in the container while being stimulated.

Torii relates to a radiation image readout apparatus and cassette wherein a reader 1 includes a conveyor system 30 with rollers 32 for transporting a phosphor sheet 2 in a container 3, wherein the container has a "light shielding shutter" 3B (wherein element 3B is read by the Examiner to correspond to the "lid" recited in independent claim 1). In Torii's apparatus, the light shielding shutter 3B is pulled back from the container 3 as the container is fed into the reader 1. As the shutter 3B is pulled back, the phosphor sheet 2 in container 3 is stimulated by a laser provided by laser generator 13. Emitted light is then read by elements 16 and 12. *See* Fig. 1 and Col. 3, line 59, to Col. 5, line 60. Entirely lacking in the Torii reference, however, is any teaching or suggestion of a support table as recited in independent claim 1.

Independent claim 1 recites a support table for placing thereon a container which houses a stimulable phosphor sheet with radiation image information recorded therein. While the basis

for rejection compares the support table of independent claim 1 of the instant invention to the plate holding section 4 of the Hayakawa reference, this comparison is inapposite, as explained below.

In contrast to the instant invention, a support table for placing thereon a container which houses a stimuable phosphor is absolutely absent from the device of Hayakawa. Hayakawa's vertical plate holding section 4 acts as a vertical hanging device for securing phosphor plates in a vertical direction, so that the plates may be scanned and read. Furthermore, the vertically hung plate holding section 4 of Hayakawa is incredibly complex, being capable of retrieving phosphor sheets by removing them from phosphor sheet cassettes, loading the phosphor sheets in the cassettes, and moving the cassettes holding the phosphor sheets to various locations within the cassette stacker (see Col. 17, lines 64 - 67, for example). Moreover, because the plate holding section 4 of Hayakawa is vertical, machinery of a complex nature is required between the plate holding section 4 and the phosphor sheet. The sheet must be attached to the plate holding section 4, and the attachment mechanisms needed for such attachment add to the complexity of the device.

Furthermore, the secondary reference maintains the deficiencies of the Hayakawa reference. That is, the Torii reference merely presents a conveyor system 30, with rollers 32. Succinctly, rollers being used to convey do not constitute a table as recited by independent claim 1.

Moreover, given the vertical configuration in Hayakawa, one skilled in the art would not combine the vertical orientation of Hayakawa (wherein Hayakawa provides vertical storage, loading and reading to save space) with the horizontal cartridge structure of Torii. In particular,

there is no mechanism contemplated by the cited combination that would permit the cartridge configuration to maintain a constant distance in the vertical arrangement of Hayakawa to counter the effects of gravity. That is, nothing within either reference teaches or suggests how the phosphor sheet would be retained within a cartridge to maintain a certain distance from a light reader in the vertical position. Accordingly, many technical questions are left unanswered by any attempt to combine the two references.

Additionally, as to claim 4, this claim recites the support table being raised and lowered by a lifting and lowering mechanism. As the prior art entirely fails to teach a support table, as previously described, it is impossible for the prior art to teach or suggest a lifting and lowering mechanism for raising and lowering of the support table for the cartridge.

Rejection of Claims 5 and 6 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 5 and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hayakawa in view of Torii, and further in view of U.S.P. No. 4,965,455 ("Schneider").

As noted previously, both Hayakawa and Torii are deficient. Schneider perpetuates these deficiencies. Additionally, because of the deficiencies of the cited art as noted above, it is thus impossible for the prior art to teach or suggest a plurality of support shafts, motors and worm gears for a support table as recited by claims 5 and 6.

Conclusion

As explained above, the instant invention includes structure and features that are altogether absent in the prior art relied upon as the basis for rejection. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the current rejections. The remaining claims are patentable at least by virtue of their ultimate dependency upon claim 1.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. Application No. 09/931,064

Attorney Docket No.: Q63766

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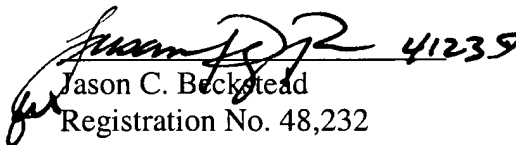
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Date: January 7, 2004